

there is a much larger consuming population. And so on, *ad infinitum*.

If I am an abolitionist, I am little if anything more than were the immortal fathers of the republic. Washington and Adams, Randolph and Jefferson, were all in sentiment inimical to slavery, and freely expressed opinions adverse to the continuance of the institution. I do not believe that the opinions of these great men can settle the question either one way or the other; but I regard, and I think every gentleman within the sound of my voice regards their opinions as being entitled to great respect. I therefore refer to them, and only refer to them so far as to read two small extracts from the great, the immortal Father of his country. The first is from a letter to Mr. John F. Mercer, dated September, 1786, in which he says:

"I never mean, unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it, to possess another slave by purchase. It being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by which slavery in this country may be abolished by law." [Irving's Life of Washington, Vol. V, page 298.]

The second is from a letter written eleven years afterwards to his nephew, Lawrence Lewis, dated August, 1797, in which he says:

"I wish from my soul that the Legislature of this State could see the policy of a gradual abolition of slavery. It might prevent much future mischief." [Ibid, page 299.]

I offer these opinions for whatever they may be worth, believing at the same time that we are more competent judges of the practical workings and quite as competent judges of the morality of slavery as even the great Washington himself.

Mr. President, I am in favor of the earliest practicable abolition of slavery in the State—and of the adoption of the 23d article of the Declaration of Rights as we have received it from the hands of the committee, without the annexation or interpolation of any amendment thereto or therein, for the two reasons which I have feebly attempted to elucidate. First, because I am persuaded to believe that slavery, as it has heretofore existed in this State, is not necessary to the happiness of anybody and especially the negro who has been the subject of slavery; and inasmuch as it is not thus necessary, it is in violation of the spirit and even the letter of the moral law. Secondly, because I think the future welfare of our State demands it.

Before closing, I wish to make a remark in relation to the matter of State compensation. This article fails to make any provision for the compensation of those who may happen to lose by the sudden abolition of slavery, and fails to empower the Legislature to make any such provision, and very justly fails to do so.

Mr. President, slavery has already been

abolished. I contend that there is not a single slave in the State. Let us see if I am correct in saying there is not a single slave in the State. If one of your servants saw fit to approach you to-morrow morning and say: "I intend to leave your service forever, and ere another day passes over my head I shall be beyond the western hills to take up my residence with a strange people," you would not think it worth your while to take any steps to prevent his absconding. Is he a slave who can approach his master and use such language as this with impunity? Certainly not. Then, sir, slavery is already destroyed in this State, and really it is not the institution of slavery which we propose to do away with, but simply the status of slavery. All we propose to do is to wipe off from our statute books all recognition of the institution which has already ceased to exist.

I submit to gentlemen thinking differently from myself, if it is the fault of the State that the slaves have been emancipated in this State or in any of the States south of it. Did the honest working men of this State have anything to do with it? Did the people of the State or any party in the State bring about this radical change? Had the Governor of the State any hand in it? or had any of the State authorities any hand in it?

Then, sir, I want to know, if neither the State, nor any of the State authorities, nor the people, nor any considerable portion of the people had anything to do with the breaking up of the institution in this State, upon what principle of justice can gentlemen claim a compensation at the hands of the State? Was it the fault, I again ask, of the honest, hard-fisted working men of the State, the small farmers of the State, the merchants of Baltimore, or the people of any of the Western counties? If not, then why should they be compelled to pay for it? Had the sudden emancipation of the slaves been under their control, you and I would still have been slaveholders; therefore, I am honestly of the opinion that the State ought not to be taxed for the destruction of property, for which destruction it is not in the smallest degree to be held responsible.

But, suppose gentlemen see fit to contend that slavery is not dead—that they are yet slaveholders. For the argument's sake, I will admit what they say to be true—then what? Are they willing to take for their negroes a fair market price? Are they willing to take \$20 for good men hands—\$10 for women and \$5 for children? No, no; they will want to be paid 4 to \$500 for a servant which they could sell nowhere for the smallest amount I have named; and if they cannot get more than that amount, any compensation would not satisfy them.

I am willing to make another admission for the sake of the argument. Suppose slavery does exist in the State, and suppose further,